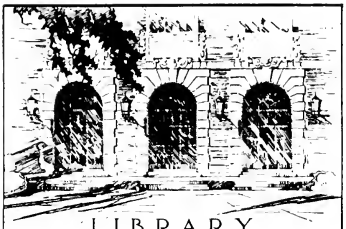

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Central Association for Stopping the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday.

SPEECH

DELIVERED BY THE

LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN

AT A

MEETING

HELD IN THE

CORN EXCHANGE, LINCOLN,

ON MONDAY, FEB. 28, 1870.

PUBLISHED BY THE ASSOCIATION.

OFFICE: 43, MARKET STREET, MANCHESTER.

MANCHESTER:
POWLSON & SONS, PRINTERS, BOW ST., JOHN DALTON ST.

ADDRESS.

The Bishop of LINCOLN said he felt it a special privilege in being allowed to be present and to preside at such a gathering, for such an object as that which called them together. He felt it to be a privilege and a honour for various reasons. The cause which brought them together was one connected with the social and spiritual welfare of all classes in the land, and he felt it to be a special duty of those who were called by God's providence to occupy places in the Church of England, not to be slack in lending such influence as they possessed towards furthering such a design. (Hear, hear.) It had been sometimes said that the Church of England was behind in these great moral and social movements, and he therefore thought it was very becoming on all ministers of the Church to do what in them lay to disabuse the public mind of such a prejudice. (Hear, hear.) For himself he might say that he attended here in order to pay a debt, and he would explain what he meant by that.

There was a certain body, perhaps not very well known in this place, he meant the Convocation of the Bishops and Clergy of the Province of Canterbury. He had been told that Convocation was an old-fashioned assembly, and that its time was taken up with theoretical disquisitions, instead of with practical designs for ameliorating the social condition of the people. He (the Bishop) begged leave to deny that assertion. Amongst all the documents put forward on the great question of temperance, perhaps there were none more instructive than that which emanated from the Convocation of this province. It had been referred to in many of the publications of the association under whose auspices they had assembled that evening. It so happened that his (the Bishop's) venerable friend, the Archdeacon of Coventry, who introduced this subject in Convocation, requested him to second what was proposed. If he (the Bishop) had remained in the Lower House of Convocation and had not been sent to Lincoln, he should have gone to Coventry. (Hear, hear, and a laugh.) It so happened, however, that he could not second his venerable friend, because he was sent to Lincoln, and he felt it better to come here than to be sent to Coventry. (Hear, hear.)

If they would look into the report of the Committee of the Lower House of Convocation on Intemperance, they would see that the second resolution was this: "That it is desirable that all public houses, and other places for the sale of intoxicating liquors, should be closed on the Lord's Day." (Cheers.) He had been told that these things were far better done in what is popularly called "another place," but he begged leave to deny this; for, if Convocation were allowed to legislate, there would not be a single public house open on the Lord's Day.

He (the Bishop) remembered, forty years ago, walking in the streets of Cambridge with his friend the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Goulburn, who represented the University, and who had, as he thought, made a great mistake in passing the Beer Act. The keeper of a beershop came out and offered Mr. Goulburn a glass of his best ale, in gratitude for the Act. But Mr. Goulburn lived to repent of what he had done; and he believed that of all the curses of this country the greatest were the beershops. He remembered, as he had said, that he and his friend were walking in the streets of Cambridge, when some of these beersellers came up and

said: "See what excellent beer we sell, because of the act you have given us." But it was bad beer, and it was a bad act (cheers); and it so happened that Lord Brougham, who was instrumental in passing it, was one of the first to wish it repealed. The Legislature sometimes made mistakes, and he had no doubt what would be done with beershops and with the Sunday sale of intoxicating liquors if Convocation had to legislate on this question; and he earnestly hoped that the English Legislature would not allow itself to be outdone by Convocation in intelligent zeal for the social welfare of the people. (Hear, hear.)

He (the Bishop) would now refer to another great event. The sister kingdom of Scotland had set them a noble example. (Cheers.) The Forbes Mackenzie Act was an illustrious precedent, and he hoped they would soon have an act in England which would be attended with the same beneficial results. In 1854 something like an attempt to imitate the act was made in England, and he thanked God it was not without some results. He alluded to Colonel Wilson Patten's Act. (Hear, hear.) By closing public houses, under certain restrictions and limitations, on Sundays, they could see what would be the result if there was a total

close. It was intended to be no half-measure, but it was frittered down by Mr. Berkeley, and deprived of some of its best provisions.

He hoped this Meeting would do all it could to finally accomplish Sunday closing altogether. If the working men were in earnest, Mr. Bruce would listen to them, Mr. Gladstone would listen to them, and would be thankful to do so, for it would save a great deal to the finances of England. But it meant more than the economy of paltry pelf; Sunday drinking to men meant misery, to women a wretched home, to children miserable firesides, and, perhaps, infanticide and destitution; and to many people it meant misery in this world, and eternal shame and sorrow in the world to come. (Applause.) Many publicans themselves would render thanks to them for being earnest in such a glorious work. Publicans had souls to be saved, and they knew that their souls were in peril so long as they continued to sell liquors on the Lord's Day. They knew that they imperilled the souls of themselves, and of hundreds, by traffic on that day, which resulted in spiritual lethargy and spiritual death. (Hear, hear.) He (the Bishop) was glad to find that many publicans had put their names to

petitions in favour of Sunday closing. And it was the duty of the public to protect the minority. How could they expect fifty publicans would shut up their shops when five hundred were determined to keep them open, and speculate on the Lord's Day for their temporal advantage? It was too much to expect ordinary men to do it, and they ought, therefore to protect the minority, who had a conscience, and knew that they had a soul. It was really a grand question, financially, socially, morally, and religiously. What was it that filled their workhouses? It was intemperance. He had been told that seventy-five per cent. of the people in workhouses were brought there by intemperance, and especially by intemperance on the Lord's Day. And when they went from the workhouses to the gaols what did they find? He (the Bishop) had been told that statistics showed that of one hundred prisoners in the gaols of this country at least seventy were brought there by intemperance. What did they, the sober men of Lincoln, pay for all this? We are all taxed for the maintenance of our workhouses, and prisons, and lunatic asylums, which are filled by victims of intemperance.

If they were in earnest they might prevent this,

and rescue the victims from their misery. (Cheers.) He denied that it would be a hardship to shut up public houses on the Lord's Day. Why should ladies be prevented from buying flowers and crinoline on the Lord's Day? (Laughter.) Why should he be prevented buying books, or they their butcher's meat? But they were prevented. Why, then, should it be said that it would it be a great hardship not to allow drink—aye poison—to be sold on the Lord's Day. (Cheers.) All society depended on mutual sacrifices. All were required to give up something, and the first thing which ought to be given up was the sale of intoxicating liquors on the Sunday. He (the Bishop) has just got a letter from one of his daughters, who was a nurse—he was not ashamed to say it—who was a nurse in one of the London hospitals. (Loud Cheers.) She said they just received three men into an accident ward in King's College Hospital; they were navvies and were grand fellows. One of them said he had not taken a drop of intoxicating liquor for six years, and that his health had been all the better for it; and he would not taste a drop, even if it were given him. He (the Bishop) was no teetotaller, but he rejoiced to hear it. He would not put such a vow on any man; it

might be a snare to him. These men were brought to the hospital in consequence of accidents, but they were likely to get better much sooner than some would? And why? Because they had good constitutions. (Hear, hear.) If they had been men suffering from *delirium tremens*, what chance would they have of getting better? None. (Hear, hear.) Why they would remain there, until they were carried out as corpses. But there was a higher view after all, and it was this. They knew that even in the turbulent times of this country's history—in the time of the great civil conflicts of 1656—that even he who sent troops to batter the churches of Lincoln from Canwick Hill, even he passed an act similar to what they now desired. He (the Bishop) was no admirer of Oliver Cromwell for battering their churches, but he did admire him for the hallowing the Lord's Day. He believed that if there was abroad a noble spirit of determination to sanctify the Lord's Day, they would not find the churches empty and the public houses full. (Cheers.) It was almost useless for them to preach in their churches on Sundays, when Satan was preaching in his beershops every day in the week. As Latimer said of old, Satan was a bishop who was never out of his diocese; he was

always at work and was always preaching in beer-shops and gin-shops. (Cheers.) And Satan preached more on Sundays than on any day. If they looked at the committals for drunkenness, they would find them four-fold as many on Mondays as on any other morning. And even if the act of Charles II. had remained in force they would have something of the same kind. They must remember that the Sabbath was holy of the Lord and honorable. If they made the Sabbath their delight, there was a special promise of rest here, and of glory hereafter. The Sabbath was the type and foretaste of that eternal rest which remaineth to the people of God. It was on the Sabbath, of all days, that God vouchsafed to give the plenteous dews of His Holy Spirit, and they might depend upon it that the man who spent his Sunday holily spent his week happily. (Applause.)

Think, friends, said the Bishop in conclusion, and I am speaking to some who are husbands, what a happy thing it is to have the delightful company of the partner of your sorrows and your joys, and the pledges of conjugal affection, at your domestic meal, not sullenly skulking in the corner of an alehouse, but making others partakers of your earthly joys, in the

humble hope, through the grace of the Holy Spirit and the mediation of the Redeemer, that you who are gathered together in your home on earth, may be joined together for eternal rest—joined together for everlasting felicity in the many mansions of your Father's house in heaven. (Loud applause.)

* * * *

The Bishop, who on rising to acknowledge a vote of thanks, was enthusiastically received, assured them he felt quite overwhelmed by the expression of their kindness. There were many things a man could support, but when he had to speak to an overwhelming weight of kindness, he fell crushed by the superincumbent load. He (the Bishop) most cordially responded to the very affecting appeal made by his friend, Mr. Gates, speaking in the name of the working men of Lincoln. (Cheers.) If there was anything more than another for which his heart yearned it was this, that the clergy should be brought more nearly, not to the upper classes of the laity, to whom they already had access, but to those who, after all, formed the moral, social, religious and political strength of the community in which they resided,—he meant the middle classes, and especially the

working classes of society. (Hear, hear.) He did to a great extent sympathise with what had been said, even in deploring the shortcomings of those associated with himself in the Christian ministry. He felt that he had many shortcomings to deplore, many things to ask pardon of Almighty God for, many things which needed reformation; but he trusted they would never suppose that he had not a desire to do his duty, whatever his ability might be. (Hear, hear.) In this great city they had an immense gathering of intelligent operatives; they had many hands united together, showing great material power, great ingenuity, and no small amount of mechanical skill. When they looked at the emporium of Lincoln, and saw that it was connected with a great part of the North of Europe; when they saw that it sent forth from the port of Grimsby agricultural implements to Denmark, to Prussia, and to the mighty empire of Russia; when they saw the triumphs of its skill diffused throughout the greater part of Europe; then they saw that the working classes possessed a great social, moral, religious, and intellectual power. How, then, was that power to be utilized, humanized, elevated, spiritualized, and sanctified? He was sure that it

could only be by self-control, by the denial of personal, individual, indulgence,—by, in fact, doing what they had done that night.* (Hear, hear.) He (the Bishop) rejoiced to find that there were so many men in Lincoln who almost resented, with indignation and scorn, the allegation that they regarded the indulgence of their animal appetite as the great purpose for which they were sent into the world. They did so because their nature recoiled against it, because they knew they had a rational soul, a moral conscience, and a soul to be saved. Therefore it was that they were not to be flattered; the working men of Lincoln and of England knew that people who pandered to their passions were their most inveterate foes, for they knew that though an enemy lurked in ambush, he was no less an enemy than if he met them front to front in the field of battle. (Cheers.) He (the Bishop) was glad to find that they were ready to denounce such allegation as an insult to their moral being, that they repudiated it with all the power they possessed, and affirmed that that was not the purpose for which they existed, but that they had higher aims and aspirations,

* At this crowded meeting resolutions in favor of Stopping the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors during the whole of Sunday had been carried unanimously.

and that, with God's aid, they would realize those aspirations. Such being the case, they were indeed fit depositaries of political power. If, unfortunately, his appeal was to be like the appeal of old, "from Philip drunk to Philip sober," if they thought the gratification of their animal passions was the main purpose for which they lived, they would not be fit depositaries of political power. He was glad that the franchise had been accorded them, because he was conscious they felt it to be a high and a holy trust, and that they would exercise it for the welfare of their country,—that they would regard themselves as existing, not for themselves, but for their country and for the world. (Cheers.) He (the Bishop) thanked Mr. Gates particularly for this special appeal, viz., that they might henceforth have more frequent opportunities of meeting together, as they had met that night, and that they might think far less of those things on which they differed, and infinitely more of those things on which they agreed. (Applause.)

The Bishop then pronounced the benediction, and the meeting separated.

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